


Pine straw harvesting in longleaf forests: best management guidelines to sustain wildlife

Ben Larson, intro
Mark Bailey, guidelines
Randy Browning, lifting pine straw


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NWF's work in longleaf

- Ongoing, successful on-the-ground restoration work with Alabama Wildlife Federation
- Building new focus on developing markets, beginning with pine straw

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Feedback on guidelines?

Please email me at
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Pine Straw Harvest in Longleaf Pine Forest

*Best Management Guidelines to
Sustain Wildlife Resources*



A Collaborative Effort

Development Team and Advisors

- **Mark Bailey**, Principal Writer/Compiler
- **Ben Larson and Tiffany Woods**, NWF
- **Becky Barlow**, Auburn University
- **Mark Hains**, The Longleaf Alliance
- **Reggie Thackston**, Georgia DNR
- **John Maerz**, University of Georgia
- **Foster Dickard**, Consultant, Mississippi

Pitchfork-lifted annually, burned biannually



Intensively mechanically raked





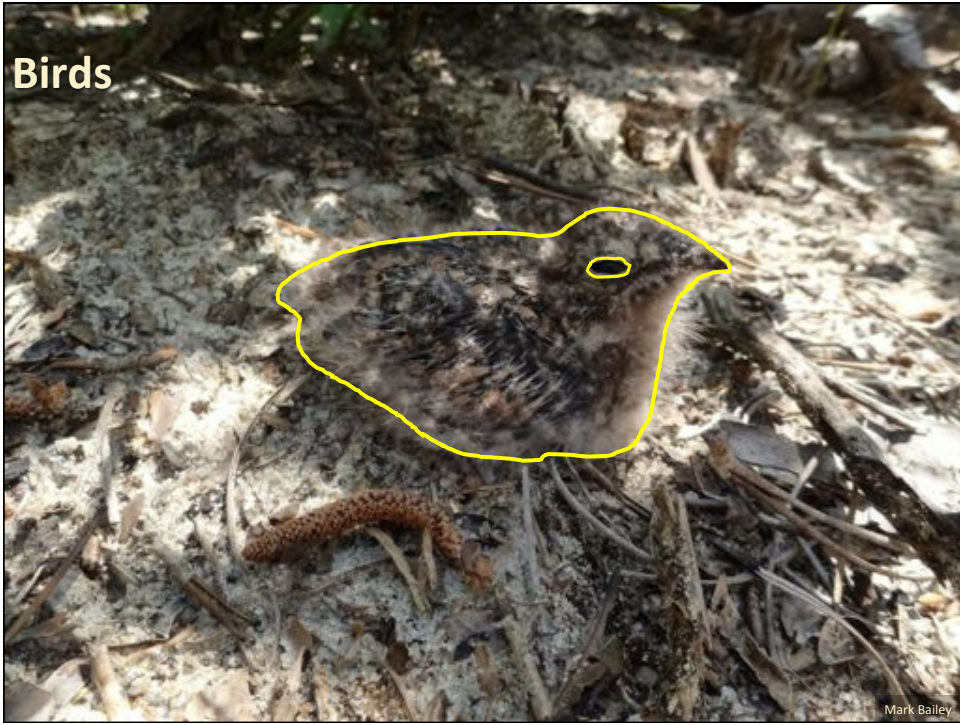
Reptiles



Birds












Assumptions of the Guidelines
Tracts to be harvested fall under one of two categories:

- 1. Old fields or formerly planted lands, with little groundcover

A photograph of a pine plantation. The ground is covered in a thick layer of brown pine needles. In the background, several rows of young, thin pine trees are planted in a grid pattern, extending into the distance under a bright sky.

John Trent

Assumptions of the Guidelines

Tracts to be harvested fall under one of two categories:

- 1. Old fields or formerly planted lands, with little groundcover
- 2. Natural or semi-natural forest with at least some intact native groundcover





Best Management Guidelines Site Selection

- Sites supporting sensitive or rare plants and/or animals should be managed for those values and either not raked for straw or only occasionally hand-lifted with great care.



Best Management Guidelines

Site Selection

- Sites supporting sensitive or rare plants and/or animals should be managed for those values and either not raked for straw or only occasionally hand-lifted with great care.
- Plant longleaf on existing cropland or pine plantation lands (***do not convert natural stands***).



Best Management Guidelines

Management Considerations

- ***A prescribed burning program is essential.*** Use regular (i.e., two to three year rotation) prescribed fires to maintain an open understory and groundcover plants important to wildlife.

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- Where groundcover is present, ***lift straw*** with pitchforks, avoiding mechanical and even hand raking when possible.

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Management Considerations

- ***A prescribed burning program is essential.*** Use regular (i.e., two to three year rotation) prescribed fires to maintain an open understory and groundcover plants important to wildlife.
- Where groundcover is present, ***lift straw*** with pitchforks, avoiding mechanical and even hand raking when possible.
- ***Thin*** to maintain sufficient openings in crown/overstory, sustaining native ground cover.

Best Management Guidelines Management Considerations



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- Divide harvesting areas into units with appropriate straw harvesting intensity to maintain a frequent burning plan and enhance habitat quality.



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- Once a stand ages past peak pine straw productivity and is first thinned, avoid excluding fire and allowing the stand to close canopy.
- Divide harvesting areas into units with appropriate straw harvesting intensity to maintain a frequent burning plan and enhance habitat quality.
- Connect stands or blocks of quality habitat with habitat corridors to facilitate wildlife movement.

Best Management Guidelines
Management Considerations

- After clearing, leave a few scattered brush piles.

A photograph showing a pine forest with a brush pile in the foreground. The brush pile is made of dry sticks and branches, and is situated on a path or clearing. The background shows a dense stand of pine trees.

Best Management Guidelines
Management Considerations

- After clearing, leave a few scattered brush piles.
- Collect only the undecomposed, recently fallen "red needles."

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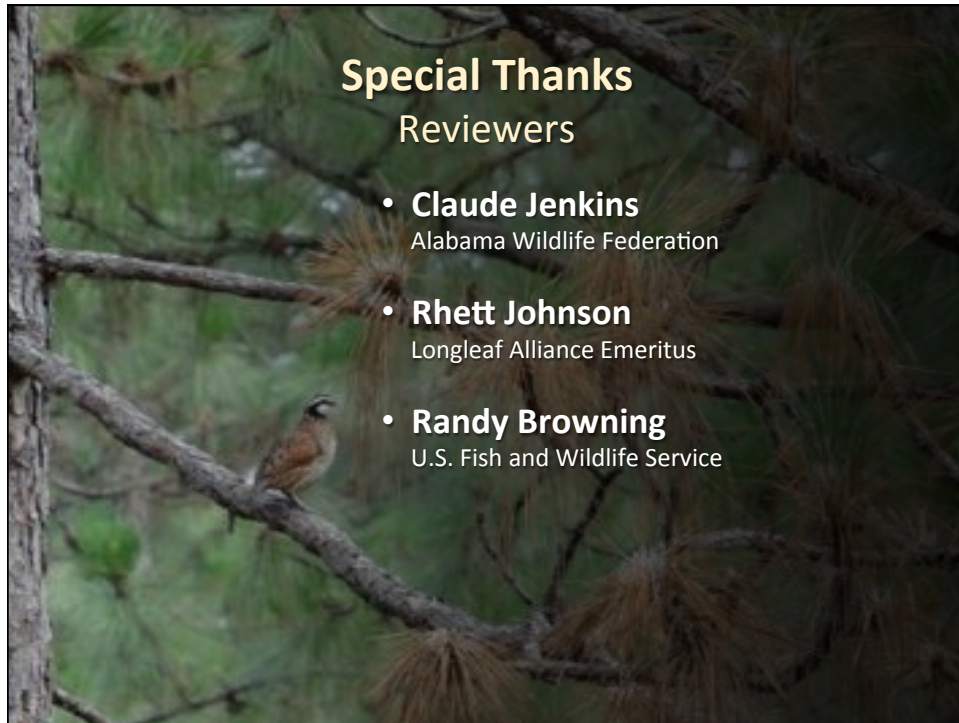
Best Management Guidelines Management Considerations

- After clearing, leave a few scattered brush piles.
- Collect only the undecomposed, recently fallen “red needles.”
- Use herbicides only if absolutely necessary (e.g., control of invasives, etc.). Choose formulations that will target undesirable species while favoring native grasses and forbs.



Best Management Guidelines Management Considerations

- If intensive, “high-impact” straw collection is to be conducted, consider setting aside scattered sanctuaries of relatively open canopy that retain natural groundcover and are managed with either no straw removal or hand collection only.



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